

contingent are valuable on account of their more hardy nature. The explanation of the various hybrids is difficult, and calls for the special knowledge possessed by the author. Famous collections, cultural directions, and a list of species make up the contents of a volume which every gardener—save perhaps the dweller on limestone—should purchase and study.

*The Practical Flower Garden.* By Helena R. Ely. Pp. xiii+304. (New York: The Macmillan Co., London; Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1911.) Price 8s. 6d. net.

IF the descriptions of experience and garden stock presented by Mrs. H. R. Ely may be accepted as a trustworthy exposition of garden practice in the eastern States of North America, we are justified in assuming that there is very little difference between the methods pursued and the plants cultivated on the two sides of the Atlantic. We had anticipated that there would be at any rate very marked differences in the trees and shrubs; also that certain herbaceous plants would be better suited to the more extreme conditions prevailing in the States, whereas with few exceptions, such as *Boltonia* and *Baptisia*, all the border perennials mentioned in the author's lists are offered in any British horticulturist's catalogue; of the climbers or vines, *Dolichos japonicus* and *Vitis labrusca* are rarely grown in English gardens.

The reader who is searching for useful hints is likely to be rewarded by a perusal of the advice regarding fertilisers and plant remedies, although the pronounced commendation of a fertiliser of unknown composition passing under the name of *Bon Arbor* is tantalising if not savouring of quackery. It should also be noted that the author, like every good horticulturist, has a favourite specific, which in her case is bone-meal, especially for *Delphiniums*. Advice is offered on the subjects of colour-schemes and the making of lawns, but a more original note is struck in the account of a garden prepared for the growth—not cultivation—of indigenous plants. It may be conjectured that Mrs. Ely does not claim to be a botanist, as certain inaccuracies are apparent, although the only flagrant mistake is in the misuse of the term "annual."

*A Short History of Ethics: Greek and Modern.* By R. A. P. Rogers. Pp. xxii+303. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1911.) Price 3s. 6d. net.

A USEFUL historical survey, chiefly descriptive but partly critical. The author's primary object is to give a short and accurate description of the leading Greek ethical systems and of those systems which represent the best type of modern philosophic ethics, from Hobbes to the end of the nineteenth century; secondarily, to show, by criticism and comparison, the connecting links between systems and the movements of thought by which new systems arise. Some familiar names are omitted, where the type of thought has already been illustrated by other thinkers; e.g. Reid is represented by Butler, and the French empiricists by Hume. Such recent systems as those of Wundt, Paulsen, Nietzsche, and the pragmatists are also omitted. The systems most lengthily considered are those of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, Hobbes, Butler, Hume, Kant, the German idealists culminating in Hegel, and the English utilitarians through Bentham, Mill, Spencer, and Sidgwick to T. H. Green, whose doctrine specially commands the author's admiration.

The book is well written, in commendably judicial tone throughout. It makes a modest claim—calling itself short and elementary—but those students who thoroughly master it will have obtained an excellent and more than elementary introduction to the subject.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts intended for this or any other part of NATURE. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

### The Forest of Auchnacarry.

THE letter in NATURE of June 1 would come as a shock to foresters throughout the world. It states that the Scotch pines at Auchnacarry are perhaps the largest and finest fragment that is left to us of the primeval Caledonian forest. In area about 1500 acres, the forest contains trees 200 to 300 years old of huge size, up to 6 feet in diameter. The scenery of the forest is of great beauty, and, save for a few isolated clumps, is all that we know to remain of the great forest of Scotch pine that once spread over all suitable ground in central Scotland. The writer also remarks that nothing is left so noble, so extensive, so worthy of preservation as this doomed forest of Lochiel's at Auchnacarry.

The photograph is striking. It is difficult to believe that forest such as this was once in the place of desolate and dreary bogland such as the Moor of Rannoch. But it was no farther back than Napoleon's time that the great forest of Rannoch was cut down and turned into the dreary waste of to-day!

Surely there is here a strong case—the strongest possible case—for the Development Commissioners! We read that they have 500,000l. yearly for five years, and this year an extra vote of 400,000l. in addition; and that a portion of their funds is to be devoted to forestry "by the purchase and planting of land."

The distant view is sometimes the clearest. To the man at a distance it is as clear as daylight that, whatever may be done for minor objects, this forest of Auchnacarry, this unique national monument, should be acquired for the country at any cost.

Italy has done much since it became a nation, but it has, perhaps unavoidably, neglected much. The most patriotic Italian will at once admit that Italy has neglected its forestry. Japan does more forestry in a week than Italy in many years! Yet Italy has nationalised the remains of its Apennine forests at Camaldole and Vallombrosa. Here are giant silver-firs not to be surpassed by any on this globe. And these most beautiful forests remain as national monuments ever pointing the way towards national regeneration, the restoration of the dreary and ruined Apennines to the beauty, the fertility, and the value of past days.

Spain is preserving the remnants of its ancient forests; Portugal is guarding them jealously. Is British forestry to sink to the level of Chinese? Surely, cost what it may, this remnant of the primeval Caledonian forest should be nationalised and preserved.

There is one important point to remember. The Italians, the Spaniards, and the Portuguese can replant and restore their national forests whenever they are strong enough as nations to do it. But these northern forests in Scotland and Sweden, near the limits of tree growth, can be restored only with extreme difficulty, if at all, when once they are destroyed. They seem to be the product of conditions that have passed away, or perhaps of geological time. Witness the Moor of Rannoch and many forests in northern Sweden. When once they have passed into bog and the great draining action of the trees has been removed, their restoration to forests seems nearly impossible at any practical expenditure. With forest near its climatic limits, this is the case in other lands and other climes.

D. E. HUTCHINS.

(Late Chief Cons. Forests B.E. Africa.)

Kenilworth, near Cape Town, July 20.

### The Drought and the Birds.

As a rule, water has been left in my garden for the wild birds, and they have taken full advantage of the opportunity for bathing and drinking.

On Monday, however, a hen blackbird rather surprised me. The hose was working in a shady spot. Her ladyship

came near, with great caution, to drink some of the drops from the grass. Having quenched her thirst, she got under the sprinkler for a shower bath. Being disturbed she flew away, but came back for a second bath, and later for a third.

This morning she returned, apparently for another bath, waited a considerable time, but as no water was forthcoming flew away.

To me this is quite a novelty; possibly other readers have had similar experience. CHARLIE WOODS.

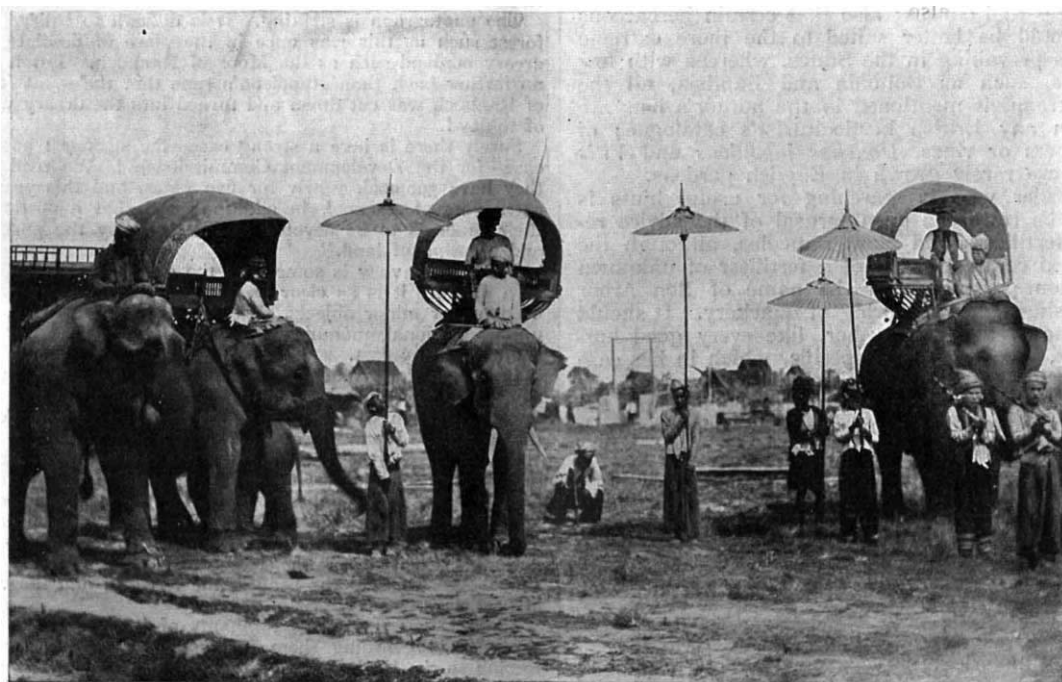
"Vectis," 2 Wellmeadow Road, Lewisham, S.E.,  
August 16.

#### A HANDBOOK OF BURMA.<sup>1</sup>

WITH the conspicuous exception of Japan, scarcely a country has been more written about, in proportion to the extent to which it has been visited, than Burma; yet we are in agreement with the publishers of this book, that there is room for one of

he goes on to say that it is certain that the book can be greatly improved, and expresses a hope that his critics and the public will write to show how this can be done, rather than indulge in mere carping and fault-finding. Yet it is hardly possible to suggest improvements without indicating faults, and in reading through the book there seems to us to be three conspicuous faults or possible improvements, according to the point of view.

First, we must regret that the course adopted for the flora, fauna, and other special subjects was not followed in the case of the geology; secondly, we suggest the provision of a more satisfactory map of Burma than the very poor little effort which the publishers have provided; and, thirdly, the omission of the word commercial on the cover of the book. The title-page describes the work merely as a "handbook of practical information"; on the cover this becomes "practical commercial and political information," but



A Sawbwa paying Call. From "Burma: a Handbook of Practical Information."

the character prepared by Sir George Scott. The etherealised visions of Fielding are fascinating reading, but give a very inadequate impression of the reality, and the ordinary book of travel is unsatisfying and inaccurate; yet between these and ponderous tomes, of which the weight and bulk make them unportable and repellent to all but the serious student, we have had no book which would give the visitor to Burma an idea of the history, administration, and sociology of the Burmese and other races, or of the aspect and productions of the country itself.

In his preface, Sir George Scott disarms criticism. After stating that the sections of Mr. Oates on the fauna, of Captain Gage on the flora, of Mr. Bruce on the forests, of Mr. Richard on means of transport, and of Mr. Mariano on music could only be excelled by those who might have larger space allowed them,

there can be little commercial value in statements based on statistics of no later year than 1905, and the deficiency in the case of Burma is especially striking, for the petroleum industry has been so revolutionised in the last three or four years that the description on p. 240 represents a condition of things which has passed away, and in the section devoted to agriculture no mention is made of the ground-nut, which, within the last few years, has risen to importance as a crop in upper Burma and an article of export from Rangoon.

For the rest we must perforce agree with the author that the book can be improved, for nothing human is perfect, but with this reservation we confess that the margin for improvement seems very small. It is not merely the best book in existence on Burma, but as nearly an ideal book as is conceivable for the purpose it is intended to fulfil. For the traveller or the intending resident, who wishes to have an intelligent appreciation of what he will see and come in contact with,

<sup>1</sup> "Burma: a Handbook of Practical Information." By Sir J. George Scott, K.C.I.E. New and Revised Edition. Pp. x+520. (London: Alexander Moring, Ltd., 1911.) Price 10s. 6d. net.